Contra Costa County Historical Society

BULLETIN

POST OFFICE BOX 190 JANUARY 15, 1973 MARTINEZ, CALIFORNIA

Action Antiques set to Perform

A new and different style meeting program will be offered Society members January 30 at the Heather Farms Recreational Center, Walnut Creek.

The evening's subject will be "Collecting Action Antiques," a topic that will be discussed and demonstrated by Ken Mullen, Walnut Creek, a member of the Western

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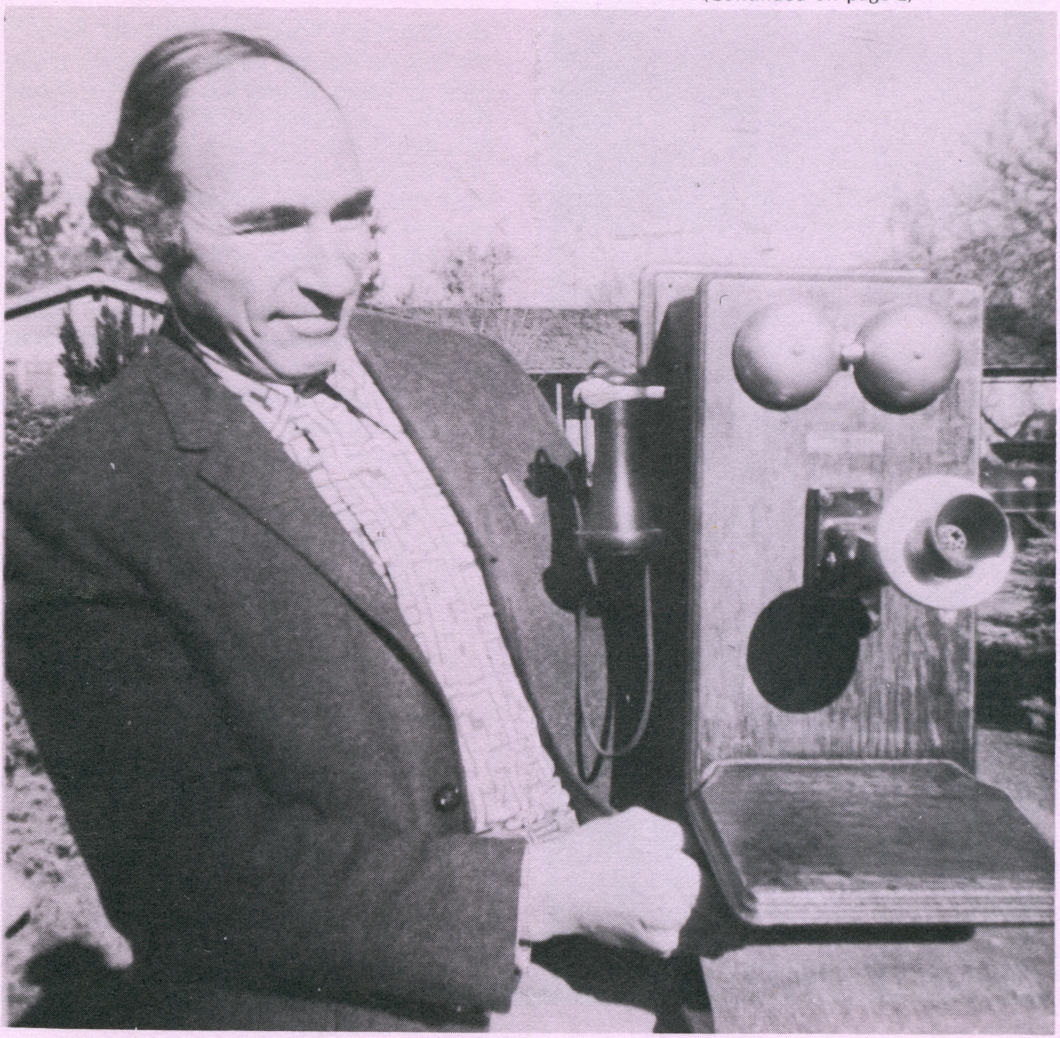
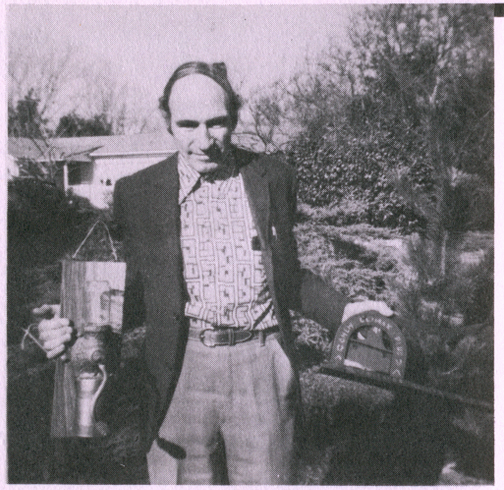
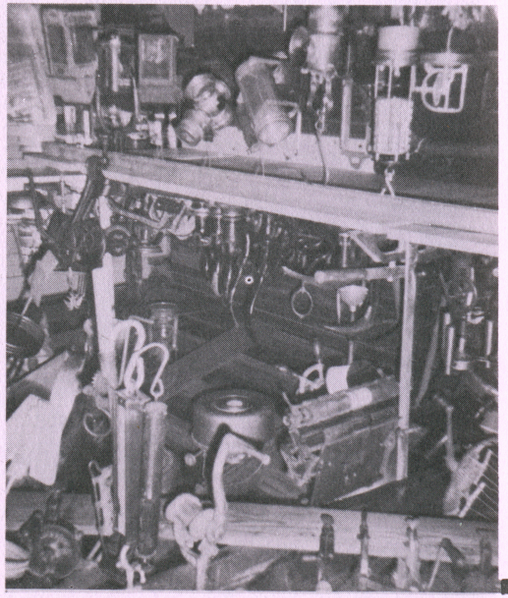


Ken Mullen, antique collector and refurbisher, who will address January 30 meeting of Society, demonstrates one of his "finds," an ancient, crank-type wall telephone.

Mullen shows that a tobacco cutter, right, located in Clayton, and a coffee grinder, once used in Oakley, are valuable treasures to the avid antique buff and collector.



This is not a junk pile but a treasure-tove of artifacts of America's yester-year in various stages of repair, under the capable hands of collector Mullen.



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Division, Early American Industries Assn.

It will be the first meeting in over a dozen years at which dinner has not been served. However, refreshments will be offered members and guests by a committee headed by Judy Manion, according to Society member Scott Akers, who is arranging the evening's program.

Action antiques is a term which applies to collectors' items that are functional, or operable, like an old cash register with a drawer that opens, or an ancient table lamp that still illuminates.

Mullen, an electrician by trade and an artist by avocation, reportedly has been collecting action antiques for only 4 years, but in that time has managed to assemble a remarkable assortment of artifacts, ranging from a 1902 raisin shredder (for mince pie-making) to an ancient Addressograph machine.

Many of the items which he has collected and restored are pictured in their original state in the 1896 Sears-Roebuck Catalog which was a best selling reprint 2 years ago.

A pair of items in the Mullen collection of interest to Contra Costans are a tobacco cutter and a business card printing press, both said to have been used in Clayton when it was a rip-roaring mining town.

Mr. Mullen started in his antique collecting by way of his kinetic art creations, constructed out of throw-away junk scrap. He decided it would be more interesting and worthwhile to reconstruct or restore an old machine than to break it up for his art needs.

He will bring a number of his action antiques to the meeting and relate their discovery and refurbishing as operable artifacts.

Society president A. F. Bray will preside.

Local History Societies Will Show Old Things Too

Director Fern Davis said that local historical societies in Contra Costa County are invited to bring one or more antiques which have special significance to the local group, and display it at the January 30 meeting.

Invitations to the societies to participate were mailed early this month, Mrs. Davis reported.

She said that participating societies would be allowed a 5-minute period in the program to "show and tell" their antique piece. Articles owned by an individual member may be substituted for society-owned antiques, Mrs. Davis added.

This miniature printing press actually works. Ken Mullen says it is a Contra Costa County antique used in bygone days by local pioneers.

SOCIETY BOOK STOCKS DWINDLE

The Society's once-appreciable inventory of its historical works is fast becoming depleted by steady sales, reports Mrs. Roberta Bloss, wife of our second vice president, who handles book sales.

Where the Society at one time held a large inventory of each of 4 issues of the "Chronicles", our popular periodical on the people and places of Contra Costa's yesteryear, there are now only a few copies of two issues remaining, Mrs. Bloss said.

They are the Spring 1966 and Fall 1967 numbers. The former contains important articles on Lafayette's Elam Brown and on the history of San Ramon Valley. The latter publishes a recollection on the town of Pacheco, an account of prehistoric Indians in the Concord area and a picture story on early excursions to Mt. Diablo. The "Chronicles" was edited by the late Leonora Galindo Fink.

Mrs. Bloss reports that the Society has sold out of all its published books on John Muir and John Marsh, as well as the facsimile Plat of the Rancho La Juntas, showing the 1844 rancho granted to William Welch.

Still in print are the facsimile lithograph, Contra Costa County California ($2) and Director George Pettitt's book, Clayton: Not Quite Shangri-la ($5).

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Speaker: Ken Mullen

Date: January 30, 1973

Place: Heather Farms Recreational Center, Walnut Creek

Time: 8:00 p.m.

Reservations: Not required.
Non-members invited.

COME ONE! COME ALL!